

FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH!

When thinking of February, what is the first event that comes to mind? Probably the heart-filled Valentine's Day! Ironically (or not so ironic?) there is more heart that comes with February than just the feast of St. Valentine. February is American Heart Month!

The celebration of American Heart Month in your child care is a great way to tie Valentine's Day to the health of children's hearts (and all staff and family members as well). More than likely, the hearts of the children in your care are healthy. However, this is the critical time period of their lives that habits are formed... *habits that last a lifetime.*

Ask yourself this: What habits can YOU help the children form, which can have the most significant impact on not only their health, but their **future life**? The answer: Habits that relate directly to their nutritional and physical health. What you teach the children today can be the difference as to whether or not their hearts stay healthy for a *lifetime*.

The Missouri Eat Smart Guidelines and the Missouri MOve Smart Guidelines offer guidance on promoting best practices in regards to nutrition and physical activity in your child care settings. How do the guidelines support heart health, you ask? Here are a few examples:

Eat Smart

Whole Grains

The dietary fiber that is found in whole grains helps to reduce blood cholesterol levels, which may help lower the risk of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes. Additionally, fiber helps provide a feeling of fullness, which can help with weight management. Maintaining a healthy weight is also protective against heart disease!

Fresh Produce

Many parts of fruits and vegetables, such as phytochemicals and antioxidants, may assist with reducing the risk of atherosclerosis. This is the thickening and hardening of arteries with plaque which can block the blood's flow and can lead to heart disease.

Less Processed Meat/Meat Alternates

Highly processed foods contain high amounts of sodium, saturated fat and *trans* fat. A high sodium diet can increase a person's blood pressure due to holding excessive fluid in the body, which causes the heart to work harder. Eating foods with saturated fat raises the level of bad (LDL) cholesterol in the blood which can increase the risk of heart disease or stroke. *Trans* fats raise bad (LDL) cholesterol (similar to saturated fat), but it also LOWERS good (HDL) cholesterol, giving an increased risk of developing heart disease and stroke (and also a higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes)!

Fewer Sweet Items

Added sugars do not supply any additional nutrients to our diets, but they do provide additional calories. These calories can lead to weight gain, which can result in overweight or obesity. Overweight and obesity is a risk factor for heart disease.

MOve Smart

Increased Physical Activity, Less Screen Time, Less Sedentary Activity

Screen time and sedentary activities, such as sitting in place for a long period of time, reduces the amount of physical activity children get in a day. Physical activity strengthens children's hearts, helps them to maintain a healthy weight and healthy blood pressure, and raises good (HDL) cholesterol. This can help lower their risk for developing heart disease as they age.

Not only is maintaining a healthy lifestyle important for children, it is important for staff as well! Additionally, staff members serve as role models to the children in your care. Children learn by example; if children observe staff participating in healthful practices, staff members will send the message that good health is important to them!



Become a
Missouri [Eat Smart](#) and [MOve Smart](#) Child Care
TODAY!



HEART HEALTH ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS!

To help teach children about their hearts, where it is located in the body, what it does for the body, etc., participate in physical activities with them. Any type of moderate to vigorous physical activity, which will make the heart beat faster, is an excellent tool to help children connect the concept of *their hearts* to learning about hearts. Some physical activities could include skipping, hopping, or running, to name a few. Once the hearts are beating at a more rapid pace, pause and have children place their hands on their chests to feel their hearts beating. Ask children “What is your heart saying?” Lead the children in saying “Thump, thump...thump, thump...thump, thump....” Then, follow with a healthy heart song, such as the following:



(Sing to the tune “Frere Jacques” and act out the lyrics)

*My heart’s beating, my heart’s beating,
Thump, thump, thump! Thump, thump, thump!
It’s slower when I’m sitting. It’s slower when I’m sitting.
Sit and rest, sit and rest.
My heart’s beating, my heart’s beating.
Thump, thump, thump! Thump, thump, thump!
It’s faster when I’m moving. It’s faster when I’m moving.
Hop and jump! Hop and jump!
-(Author unknown)*



This is a great opportunity to discuss with children their hearts and how they can keep their hearts healthy. Ask the children to think of ways they can keep their hearts healthy, such as eating healthy foods and exercising. Tell them that when their hearts are healthy, they have happy hearts. Do another moderate to vigorous physical activity, to increase their heart rates again. Ask them to listen again to their hearts and say, “What is your heart saying?” This time, lead them in saying “Thank you....Thank you.....Thank you” in a beating motion (thump thump....thump thump...thump thump....)

STRAWBERRY ACTIVITY

February 27 is Strawberry Day! Strawberries also serve as a great connection to heart health with their heart-shaped figures. Here is a fun hands-on food activity for the snack meal, to help children connect strawberries to heart health: a heart-healthy strawberry “pie”!

INGREDIENTS*:

Whole wheat graham crackers
Low fat vanilla yogurt
Whole strawberries, fresh

*Assure there are enough graham crackers and strawberries available to meet the minimum CACFP requirements for the grain and fruit components of a snack meal.

1. Lead children in the preparation of strawberries.
 - Help as they wash the strawberries and remove the stems.
 - Guide children in carefully cutting the strawberries into slices.
(Use a child safe knife and do not leave children unattended while using the knife.)
2. Instruct children to spread the yogurt over the graham crackers.
3. Layer the strawberry slices on top of the yogurt.

Celebrate with the children in their successful preparation of strawberry “pie” — with heart-healthy ingredients! Now take a bite and taste the wonderful flavors!

CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES!

There are numerous resources available to assist you and your staff in serving healthful meals, planning nutrition education activities, and in generating physical activity ideas within your child care setting.

Here are just a few examples!

Want to improve physical activity practices within your child care center?

If so, a great opportunity is coming soon!

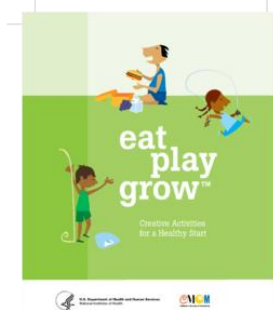
Apply for your chance to work one-on-one with a coach that will guide you and your staff in meeting the MOve Smart Guidelines! With the “Physical Activity Coaching Program,” a trained coach will work with your child care center for about 5 months. Staff will receive 2 hours of training (clock hours!); coach will make onsite visits to help incorporate physical activity into the daily schedule; coach will help implement physical activity policies; and more, with a goal for you to become recognized as a MOve Smart Child Care. The best part—the coaching program is **free** for centers that commit to working with the coach, schedule the required training and follow through with making some improvements as needed. To sign up and check on availability in your area, contact Barbara Keen at Barbara.keen@health.mo.gov or 573-522-2820.

Recruitment is open for centers to start coaching in April 2015!

EatPlayGrow

EatPlayGrow™ is an early childhood health curriculum developed by the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) in partnership with the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH’s) We Can! program. This curriculum combines the most up-to-date science from the NIH with CMOM’s creative educational approach to teach young children and their parents how to make healthy nutritional and physical activity choices. It is an ideal program for child care centers, museums, community centers, faith-based organizations, public libraries, and other community locations where parents and their children come to learn, be active, and have fun.

EatPlayGrow™ is free and available online! [Download a copy now.](#)



Tune in to the Seasons!

Visit the [Seasonal Produce Guide](#) —Nutrition Through the Seasons — to find what fruits and vegetables are in season and when. By clicking on a fruit or vegetable, you will discover recipes and educational materials that can be used within your child care setting! What a wonderful way to celebrate seasonal flavor with the children in your care!

[Seasonal and Simple](#) is a guide to help you find, select, store, and prepare fresh fruits and vegetables that are found in Missouri! There are tools to help you identify when different fruits and vegetables are in season in Missouri, where you can find it (Farmer’s Market information for YOUR area!), recipes celebrating local flavor, and more! To make things even better, Seasonal and Simple is available as an App for your smart phone, so you can always have the best information right on hand!

These are both GREAT tools to help you identify and serve the freshest ingredients to the children in your care!

DID YOU KNOW?

The heart-recognition activity above is a great way to incorporate a structured and learning-integrated activity into the child care curriculum. Additionally, by serving whole grains, lean meat/meat alternates and fresh fruit with the strawberry activity above, you'd meet some of the Eat Smart Guidelines at the snack meal!

These activities (and many more!) can be utilized within your child care settings to help you and your staff meet the Missouri Eat Smart and MOver Smart Guidelines!

SUCCESS STORIES:

Have you had great successes in meeting the Missouri Eat Smart and Missouri MOver Smart Guidelines? Are you working towards the Guidelines and found a resource to be extremely beneficial for you and your staff? Do you have any tips to share on facilitating best practices (unstructured, structured and learning-integrated physical activities, family style meals, adult role modeling, etc.) within your child care setting? If so, we would love to hear from you! Email cacfp@health.mo.gov with your success story and you may be featured in a future Wellness Newsletter!

Become a Missouri Eat Smart Child Care and a Missouri MOver Smart Child Care today! Go to www.health.mo.gov/eatsmart and www.health.mo.gov/movesmart to learn more, review the guidelines and to print out the applications! If you have questions about these programs, call 1-800-733-6251 or email cacfp@health.mo.gov. We will be more than happy to answer any questions and to help you reach your nutrition and physical activity goals for child care!

FEBRUARY DAYS:

4- Homemade Soup Day
16- Almond Day
26- Pistachio Day
27- Strawberry Day
2nd Monday- Oatmeal Monday
4th Thursday- Chili Day
2nd week- Great American Pizza Bake
4th Week- National Pancake week
American Heart Month
Bake for Family Fun Month
Berry Fresh Month
Cherry Month
Hot Breakfast Month
Grapefruit Month
Potato Lovers Month
Sweet Potato Month
Snack Food Month
Super Bowl
Valentine's Day
Mardi Gras

<http://food.unl.edu/fnh/february>

***Incorporate nutrition and physical activities
into your lesson plans today!***

